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# **Conference Proceedings**

Edited by  
Su-Hie Ting  
Florence G. Kayad  
Collin Jerome  
Soubakeavathi Rethinasamy

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**Proceedings of International Conference on Language Studies 2014  
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- Associate Professor Dr Su-Hie Ting

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## **The Effect of Difficult Letters on Primary School Students' Writing Ability**

**Kai Yien Jee<sup>1</sup>**

**Julia Ai Cheng Lee<sup>2</sup>**

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

<sup>1</sup>kaiyienjee@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>aclee@fcs.unimas.my

### **Abstract**

The study examined the effect of difficult letters on Malaysian primary school students' writing ability. A sample of 150 and 162 Primary Two students in study 1 and study 2 respectively were examined. The students exhibited a range of proficiency in their ability to write their full names, capital letters, small letters, and to copy words. Capital letters *G*, *M*, *W*, and *Y* and small letters *g*, *j*, *q*, *k*, and *f* were difficult letters. In study 1, students with higher percentage of difficult letters in their names had significantly lower name writing scores. Also, in study 1, students with higher difficulties in writing small letter *q* had significantly lower scores in copying the word *queen*. This study shed light on the importance of transcription (i.e., the students' ability to write the dictated letters) as some letters are difficult for the students to write. Implications of the findings on handwriting instruction and intervention are discussed.

**Keywords:** transcription, handwriting, difficult letters, primary school, writing ability

### **Introduction**

Identification of the difficult letters is important, yet few have examined difficult letters among young children. Furthermore, given that the findings of the empirical studies on difficult letters were inconclusive due to the differences in the sample (i.e., preschoolers, kindergartners, first, second, and third graders, and teachers), methods (i.e., to copy letters, to write letters from memory, to write dictated letters, or based on teachers' opinions), and letter forms (i.e., only small letters, both capital and small letters, or in either form), examining capital and small letters that are difficult to write is useful to develop a scope and sequence for teaching less difficult letters before teaching the more difficult ones (Graham et al., 2001). Additionally, the time spent to teach letter formation of the more difficult letters may be increased so that students are able to master the formation of the letters (Graham et al., 2001). The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the students' writing ability (i.e., in writing full names, capital letters, small letters, and in copying words)?
2. What are the capital and small letters that are difficult to write?